

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 IO-13
OES-07 EB-08 COME-00 PA-01 NASA-01 SOE-02 DOE-15
/131 W

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R 101300Z MAY 78
FM AMCONSUL STUTTGART
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4311
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L STUTTGART 0900

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR MPOL SOPN PGOV GW CG US
SUBJECT: OTRAG TEST LAUNCH

REF: A) STATE 77496 (NOTAL) B) LUBUMBASHI 255 (NOTAL) C) BONN 5086
(NOTAL) D) COLOMBO 862 (NOTAL) E) BRASILIA 1638 (NOTAL) 77
STUTTGART 1702 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: IN LENGTHY DISCUSSION WITH CONGEN OFFICER, OTRAG
CONSULTANT RICHARD GOMPERTZ PROVIDED AN UPDATE OF A VARIETY OF
ISSUES CONNECTED WITH OTRAG ACTIVITIES. OTRAG IS PLANNING TWO
LAUNCHES IN LATE MAY INSTEAD OF AS ORIGINALLY ANNOUNCED IN JUNE
FROM THEIR ZAIRE FACILITY, WHICH, IF SUCCESSFUL, WILL KEEP OTRAG
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ON ITS COMMERCIAL AND TECHNICAL FEET. END SUMMARY.

1. RICHARD GOMPERTZ, AMERICAN CONSULTANT WITH OTRAG, AND A LONG
TIME CONTACT OF OURS, CALLED ON CONGEN OFFICER MAY 9 FOR A GENERAL
DISCUSSION OF OTRAG ACTIVITIES. GOMPERTZ IS LEAVING FOR ZAIRE NEXT
WEEK TO PARTICIPATE IN A DOUBLE LAUNCH FROM OTRAG'S ZAIRE FACILITY
THE LAST WEEK IN MAY. TWO SINGLE STAGE ROCKETS, A 16 METER AND A 12

METER, WILL BE LAUNCHED TO AN ANTICIPATED NON-ORBITAL HEIGHT OF 85 KM. IF THE LAUNCHES ARE SUCCESSFUL, AS EXPECTED, THE NEXT STEP WILL BE A TWO STAGE LAUNCH THIS FALL. SUCH A DEMONSTRATED SUCCESS WILL BENEFIT BOTH OTRAG'S FINANCIAL POSITION, AS NEW INVESTORS ARE REASSURED EVERYTHING IS AGAIN ON SCHEDULE, AND ITS TECHNOLOGICAL REPUTATION. BOTH HAVE RECENTLY LAGGED DUE TO THE POOR INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY OF THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. OTRAG IS BEING AIDED BY SOME MORE POSITIVE PUBLICITY FROM SOURCES SUCH AS JOHN DORNBERG IN MUNICH, WHO RECENTLY DID A FAVORABLE OTRAG ARTICLE FOR POPULAR SCIENCE MAGAZINE.

2. OTRAG'S CONCERNS ABOUT GERMAN GOVERNMENT ANTIPATHY HAVE ALSO LESSENED AS THE COMPANY'S PROBLEMS MOVED OFF THE FRONT PAGE. PREVIOUSLY REPORTED GERMAN GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO PROHIBIT EXPORT OF OTRAG COMPONENTS TO ZAIRE (REF F) HAVE NOW CEASED. ROCKETS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT FOR THE MAY LAUNCH WILL BE FLOWN FROM THE FRG IN TWO OTRAG OWNED PLANES.

3. AT THE REQUEST OF UNSPECIFIED OFFICIALS IN THE GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, OTRAG ALLOWED A DELEGATION FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY TO VIEW THE LAMPOLDSHAUSEN STATIC LAUNCH FACILITY. GOMPERTZ REPORTS THAT ALTHOUGH HE WAS PERSONALLY NOT PRESENT, IN AN EFFORT TO PLAY DOWN ANY HINT OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT, THE SOVIET VISIT WAS COMPETENT AND FRIENDLY. SOVIETS HAVE MADE NO SIMILAR ATTEMPT TO VIEW ZAIRE FACILITY.

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4. OTRAG HAS RECEIVED MANY REQUESTS FROM THE PRESS, INCLUDING ONE FROM WALTER CRONKITE, TO ATTEND THE ZAIRE LAUNCH, BUT FOR "LOGISTICAL" REASONS IS NOT WILLING TO INVITE DIRECT COVERAGE. THE MAY LAUNCH, AS DISCUSSED ABOVE, IS CONFIDENTIAL, AS THE PRESS HAS BEEN GIVEN A BOGUS JUNE DATE. OTRAG WILL PROVIDE PRESS RELEASES AND PHOTOS FROM THEIR OWN SOURCES, AND DOWNPLAYED OUR SUGGESTION THAT THESE TACTICS COULD LEAD TO ADDITIONAL ADVERSE PUBLICITY. ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT OF ZAIRE OFFICIALS WILL ATTEND THE LAUNCH, NO OTHER OUTSIDE PRIVATE OR DIPLOMATIC VISITORS ARE ANTICIPATED, ACCORDING TO GOMPERTZ.

5. COMPERTZ REPORTS CONTACTS ARE STILL BEING MAINTAINED WITH BRAZIL AND SRI LANKA IN ORDER TO HAVE A FALLBACK LAUNCH SITE SHOULD THE POLITICAL SITUATION REQUIRE A RAPID DEPARTURE FROM ZAIRE. OTRAG DOES NOT EXPECT TO HAVE TO USE EITHER OF THESE OPTIONS.

6. OTRAG HAS RECENTLY DEVELOPED CONTACTS WITH THE EARTHPORT FOUNDATION (EF) IN SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA. EF IS A BRANCH OF THE MINNESOTA-BASED SABER FOUNDATION, AND APPARENTLY HAS OR IS ATTEMPTING TO DEVELOP QUASI-OFFICIAL TIES WITH AN UNSPECIFIED BRANCH OF THE UNITED NATIONS. THROUGH THIS POTENTIAL UN CONNECTION, EF WOULD PLAN A SERIES OF NON-NATIONAL COMMERCIAL LAUNCH FACILITIES IN THE

THIRD WORLD, FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TAX-FREE LAUNCH AND RELATED INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES IN EQUATORIAL COUNTRIES. PANAMA, NIGERIA, SRI LANKA AND INDONESIA HAVE ALREADY BEEN APPROACHED BY EF, ACCORDING TO COMPERTZ. GOMPERTZ CONCLUDED THAT IF OTRAG WERE ABLE TO USE THESE FACILITIES, AND COULD MAKE USE OF SUCH A UN CONNECTION, A MAJOR PROPORTION OF THEIR POLITICAL PROBLEMS AS A PRIVATE GERMAN COMPANY MIGHT BE REMOVED.

7. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH WE KNOW NOTHING OF EF OR THE SABER FOUNDATION, IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT OTRAG IS CLUTCHING AT A STRAW IN THE WIND, AND REALIZES IT. THE SLOWDOWN IN ADVERSE PUBLICITY, AND APPARENT EASING OF FRG CONCERNS OVER OTRAG ACTIVITIES, AND A SUCCESSFUL MAY LAUNCH, COULD INCREASE OTRAG'S STRENGTH AS AN INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION. GIVEN PAST SOVIET CONCERNS, OF COURSE, CONFIDENTIAL

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A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH COULD HAVE THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF PRECIPITATING AN ADDITIONAL EXPRESSION OF CONCERN. END COMMENT.

8. IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS WE HAVE PICKED UP SKEPTICISM FROM QUALIFIED LOCAL UNIVERSITY SOURCES, WHO HAVE ACCESS TO OTRAG'S STUTTGART TEST FACILITIES. THESE SOURCES CONTEND THAT OTRAG'S STATIC TESTS HAVE NEVER ACHIEVED COMPLETE SUCCESS, AND THEY PUT LITTLE FAITH IN OTRAG'S ABILITY TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN ZAIRE. MILLER

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